

Just prior to the investigation of the Coage Indian Murder Cases by the United States Bureau of Investigation, two dozen Coage Indians died under suspicious circumstances, and the entire Coage Indian Tribe, as well as the white citizens of that locality, were terror stricken and in fear of their lives. This made the task of this Bureau's Agents extremely difficult because law-abiding citizens actually feared to converse with them relative to the recent killings. *Rob* *14-1-21*

MURDER OF ANNA BROWN.

Anna Brown, divorced daughter of Lizzie G, was murdered on May 25, 1921, three miles from the town of Fairfax, on the pasture lands of W. E. Hale, in the bottom of a small ravine. Bureau Agents found from investigation that she was murdered by Kelsey Morrison and Bryan Burkhardt, who had driven her to this lonely spot. Bryan Burkhardt held her after she had been gotten into a drunken stupor, while Kelsey Morrison shot her in the back of the head with a .32 automatic pistol which had been furnished him for this purpose by W. E. Hale a few hours prior to the actual murder. These facts were developed by confession of Kelsey Morrison himself, who testified to these facts at the trial of W. E. Hale for murder, and was substantiated by the confession of his wife, Katherine Cole Morrison, a full-blood Coage Indian. Mat Williams, a bootlegger, substantiated these facts also on the witness stand, stating that he saw her murdered while delivering whiskey ordered by Morrison and Burkhardt. *Rob* *14-1-21*

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MURDER OF HENRY ROAN

Henry Roan was a picturesque full-blood Ceage Indian, six feet tall, and fine looking specimen. He wore his hair in plaits down his back, and was an inveterate drunkard who stayed away from his home for weeks at a time. William K. Hale, about a year prior to the murder of Roan, had taken out a \$25,000 life insurance policy on Roan. John Hansey made friends with Roan by means of Roan's fondness for whiskey, and took him out several times, ostensibly to furnish him whiskey, but in reality to murder him. Upon each occasion, Hansey lost his nerve, but finally persuaded Roan on one of these trips to drive to the bottom of a canyon out of sight of the road, and proceeded to shoot Roan through the neck of the head with a .45 automatic pistol, which he had obtained from the arsenal of Henry Grammer. This occurred on January 23, 1923. It was developed by Bureau Agents that Hale hired Hansey to commit this murder, buying him a 1923 Ford automobile prior to the murder, and paying him \$1,000 in cash after the murder had been committed. It developed also that Henry Grammer had furnished John Hansey to Hale as the killer. Roan was found several days later sitting upright in his car, frozen stiff. The facts surrounding the murder of Roan were proven by John Hansey's own confession, as well as a confession of Ernest Burkhart, nephew of William Hale, who was present at all negotiations relative to the murder of Roan. John Hansey did not even know Roan's name at the time he murdered him, but had simply had Roan pointed out to him as the

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Indian who was to be "bumped off", by William K. Hale, on the streets of Fairfax, Oklahoma. Henry Roan was the only one of the five persons proven to have been murdered at the instigation of W. K. Hale, who was killed on restricted Indian land, thereby giving the United States jurisdiction over the crime. Roan's murdered body was found upon the restricted homestead allotment of Rose Little Star, whose Indian name was Ton-Pah-Pe.

MURDER OF WILLIAM E. "BILL" SMITH;  
his wife, RITA SMITH, Osage Indian;  
NETTIE BROOKSHIRE, their white servant.

William E. "Bill" Smith stated openly that he believed W. K. Hale had killed Henry Roan and Anna Brown, and would not hesitate to kill the last of Lizzie Q's children. In addition to this fact, William E. Smith and W. K. Hale had had an argument about \$6,000 which Smith claimed Hale owed him. On the night of March 10, 1923, the house of William E. Smith was blown up, having a five-gallon can of nitro-glycerin exploded under it, blowing the house to atoms and killing Rita Smith and Nettie Brookshire instantaneously, while mangling the body of William E. Smith horribly. He lived a few hours and stated his belief that Hale had had him killed.

It was developed through investigation by Bureau Agents that W. K. Hale had hired John Bamsy and Ace Kirby to murder William E. Smith, and had subsequently paid Bamsy approximately \$1600. These

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Facts were proven by means of a confession obtained from John Ramsey himself, as well as the confession of Ernest Burkhart, who pointed out Smith's house to John Ramsey under instructions from Hale, and sought out Ramsey on the day of this murder to inform him that W. K. Hale and Henry Grammer were going to Fort Worth to a cattlemen's conference, and that William K. Smith should be murdered that night. It developed further that W. K. Hale had attempted to hire the notorious outlaw, Al Spencer, to commit this murder. He refused, and Hale also attempted to hire "Blackie" Thompson, Dick Gregg, and his father, John Gregg, to murder William Smith and his family, all of whom refused.

In addition to the solution of these murders, the Bureau Agents discovered that Mollie Burkhart, full-blood Osage Indian wife of Ernest Burkhart, at the time the Government commenced its investigation of the case, was slowly dying from what was believed to be slow poison. It was an established fact that as soon as she was gotten out of the control of Burkhart and hale she immediately regained her health, and is living at the present date.

INTERESTING SIDE LIGHTS ON CASE.

W. K. hale gained control of a bank at Fairfax, Oklahoma, was part owner of a store there, and grew immensely wealthy from his dealings with the Osage Indians, including the leasing of grazing land and the sale of cattle to the Indians.

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Ert Lawson, a convict confined in the Oklahoma State Penitentiary at McAlester, Oklahoma, made pertinent confessions relative to the murders, claiming to have been employed by Hale to murder William Hoag and his family. Investigation by Bureau Agents developed that Hale had concocted this story which pretended to implicate Hale, knowing full well that he could prove a perfect alibi for Ert Lawson, and thereby absolve himself of the same crime.

In addition to this effort on Hale's part to mislead the investigators, he hit upon the further plan of throwing suspicion upon one Roy Bunch, who had been intimately associated for a year or two past with Hoag's wife, and who subsequently married Hoag's wife after Hoag's murder. Circumstances did point the finger of suspicion at Bunch, and it was necessary for Bureau Agents to prove Bunch innocent before they proved Lawson and Hale guilty of the murders. This was done through the confessions of Ernest Burkhart and John Ramsey, which vindicated Bunch.

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John Kasey was immediately located by the Agents, and upon being confronted by Burkhart, and learning that Burkhart had confessed, made a confession as to all of the murders.

*at the same time*  
A statement was also obtained from Katherine Cole Morrison, full-blood Osage Indian wife of Kelsey Morrison, relative to the murder of Anna Brown.

Ernest Burkhart, after his confession, requested that he be placed under surveillance since he feared that W. K. Hale would have him killed as a result of Burkhart's confession. "Doc" Kirby, who assisted in the murder of E. E. Smith and his family, and who actually placed the five-gallon can of nitro-glycerin under the Smith house, was feared by Hale, who caused Kirby to attempt to rob a grocery store near the Kansas-Oklahoma line, assuring Kirby that the owner of the grocery store possessed certain valuable gear. The groceryman was in turn informed of the exact hour of the contemplated robbery, and greeted Kirby with several loads of buckshot from his shot gun as Kirby forced an entrance to the grocery store through a window, thereby removing a

~~... collected male and his associates. Bert Lawson,~~  
 whose "hogus" confession caused Bureau Agents many hours of weary work,  
 upon his release into custody of the Agents, proved to be a glutton  
 who ate T-bone steak and french-fried potatoes three times a day. On  
 his first visit to a Y.M.C.A. cafeteria with Bureau Agents, upon reach-  
 ing the cashier, he was found to have four pieces of pie and three  
 pieces of cake upon his tray, and complained of the fact that he had  
 no room for a meat dish.

Dewey Delah, a material Government witness, who testified to  
 the fact that he was hired by W. K. Hale to murder Kelsey Morrison's  
 wife, but subsequently lost his nerve, was released from the Syracuse,  
 Kansas, jail to testify. Federal Officers had to purchase a pair of  
 shoes for him before they could bring him back to Oklaahoma for the trial.

This same witness, while being held at Guthrie, Oklahoma,  
 with other material witnesses who had been transferred from the Kansas  
 State penitentiary, was left in a jail, the bars of which were found  
 to have been partly sawed, although the other prospective witnesses  
 had been removed therefrom. He showed his appreciation by breaking  
 out the sawed bars, and was subsequently located by Bureau Agents  
 attempting to hide in a berral at a pressing shop in Pawhuska, Oklahoma,  
 where he was waiting to have his suit pressed. He was clad only in  
 his underclothing at this time. He gave as the reason for his jail-  
 break that he intended calling on a lady friend, who, incidentally,  
 was his ex-wife, Cecelia Bigheart, full-blood Osage Indian woman.

Devey Selph walked out on a drunken jailer, taking with him the jailer's pistol, afterwards stealing an automobile in which he made his escape. He was recaptured by Bureau Agents at a subsequent date, and returned to testify at the trial of Hale. Devey Selph's next attempt to escape after being eventually returned to the Arkansas State Penitentiary, to complete a sentence there, resulted fatally for him.

One Special Agent of the United States Bureau of Investigation posed as an Indian medicine doctor in an undercover investigation, claiming to be in search of relatives who had moved to Oklahoma several years before. He made a lot of medicine around Fairfax, consisting of sweetened water, and was taken in by the Indians, visiting in their homes and attending their ceremonials, thereby gaining much useful information. Not only did the Agent act as a medicine man in actually dispensing the sweetened water to the Indians in return for their confidence and cooperation, but he also served as an Indian medicine man in the inner circle of their tribal councils, helping them to make plans for administration of their tribal problems and government.

Another Special Agent of the United States Bureau of Investigation working undercover on the case posed as an insurance salesman, and actually sold life insurance of a legitimate character, thereby gaining entrance to the homes of influential citizens and gathering useful information which citizens refused to give to

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Government Agents openly because of their fear of W. K. Hale. In buying this life insurance, of course, information about the personal habits and other types of information valuable to insurance companies would be obtained and frequently this information would have a direct bearing upon different angles of the case under investigation. He contacted W. K. Hale, himself, under this guise and almost succeeded in selling him a policy.

Still another Special Agent of the United States Bureau of Investigation played the part of a plain Texas cow man, and established close association with many of Hale's business intimates and employees, all of whom unknowingly contributed useful information. The Agents of the United States Bureau of Investigation who were working undercover on this case met in remote and dangerous places, such as the woods previously used as a meeting place by Al Spencer and his outlaw gang, and Dead Man's Hill, where many murders and robberies had been plotted. Two of the Agents of the United States Bureau of Investigation upon one occasion, together with a Lieutenant of the State Bureau of Criminal Identification of Oklahoma, set up for two nights and days with a convict witness before obtaining a statement from him.

Ernest Burkhardt, nephew of Hale, proved to be the weak link in Hale's organization, and was the one who broke down first and confessed everything.

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An attorney for Hale located two tramps and carefully schooled them in helping prepare a defense for the trial of Hale. The alert Agents of the Bureau discovered this situation, secured confessions from them, and thereby prevented their appearance at the trial. Some witnesses actually did reach the Courthouse and testify falsely, and received subsequent sentences because of their perjured testimony. Other friends and relatives of Hale were sentenced for being in contempt of Court and interfering with the legal progress of the Court.

Some of the information obtained by an Agent of this Bureau indicated that in connection with the mysterious deaths of a large number of Indians, the perpetrators of the crime would get an Indian drunk, have a doctor examine him and pronounce him drunk, following which a proper morphine hypodermic would be injected into the Indian and after the doctor departed, the members of the gang would inject an enormous amount of morphine under the armpit of the drunken Indian, and the quantity of morphine would result in his death. The doctor's certificate would subsequently read "Death from alcoholic poison."

John Ramsey, upon his trial for murder, offered an alibi to the effect that he was not in Fairfax, Oklahoma, on the date of the murder for which he was being tried.

Investigation of Agents of the United States Bureau of Investigation resulted in the production of the hotel register of an old

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*Final Report  
State  
Commission*

*John Ramsey*

Indian woman who had formerly operated a hotel at Fairfax, Oklahoma, reflecting that he was actually registered in this hotel on the day of the murder. This Indian woman, it developed, had been furnished whiskey by a shyster lawyer, presumably working in the interest of Hale, in an attempt to have her change her testimony. This lawyer was subsequently sentenced to eighteen months in a Federal Penitentiary for this action.

W. K. Hale, who had Henry Roen killed, had the autopsy performed in the back of his store, and acted as a pall-bearer at Roen's funeral. John Ramsey, who actually killed Roen, appeared, and after examining the remains of the Indian, pretended to be deeply affected.

False rumors and statements on the part of W. K. Hale's myriads of friends and henchmen caused Bureau Agents to make needless trips to California, New Mexico, Old Mexico, Kansas, Colorado, Texas and Arizona. Agents of the Bureau developed that at the autopsy held upon the discovery of the murdered Anna Brown, her body was cut into small pieces upon the order of W. K. Hale to cover up the fact that she had been murdered. She had been shot through the back of the head with a .32 automatic at the instigation of Hale.

Hale and John Ramsey were finally convicted for the murder of Henry Roen, and sentenced to life imprisonment in the Federal Penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kansas. These two convictions were in the Federal Court due to the fact that the Government had prosecutive

Jurisdiction over the actual place where Roan was murdered. Other sentences imposed in the State Court were as follows:

Ernest Burkhart, life imprisonment, for the murder of W. K. Smith and family.

Kelsey Morrison, life imprisonment, for the murder of Anna Brown.

Bryan Burkhart, brother of Ernest Burkhart, turned State's evidence in the State Court and was never convicted.

Relative to what became of W. K. Hale's daughter, "Billie" Hale, one of the Bureau Agents who investigated the case states that about a year subsequent to her father's conviction she married a full-blood Osage Indian, erected a home, and at present lives within a few hundred yards of the spot where Anna Brown's murdered body was found.

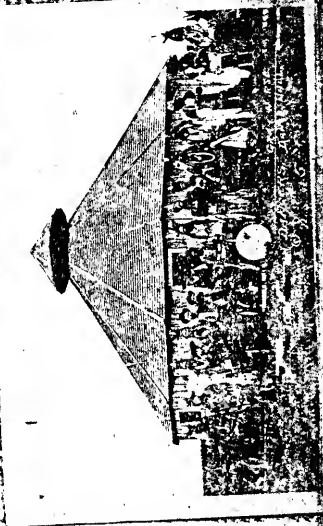
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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

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PENALTY FOR

PHOTOGRAPHS IN CASE OF W. E. (BILL) SMITH, ET AL  
OSAGE INDIAN MURDER CASES.

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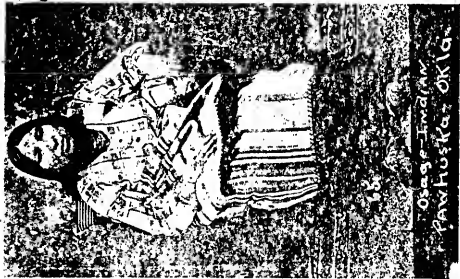
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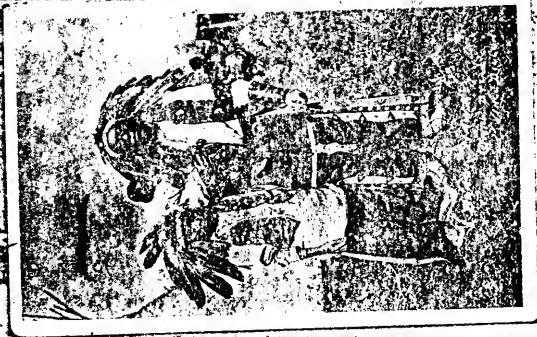
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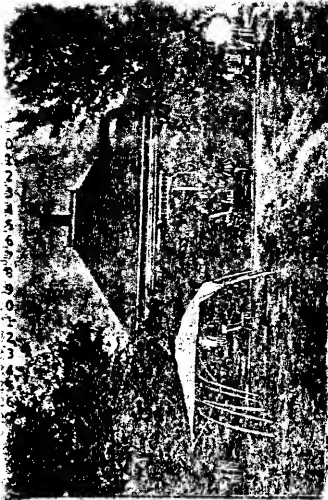
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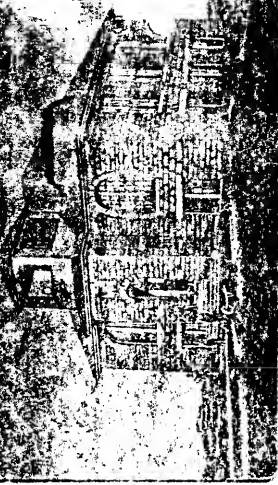
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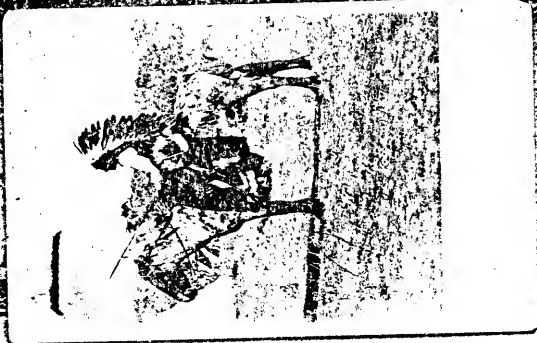
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UNITED STATES BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

11-6-22

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 Nov 24-1933

WILLIAM KING HALE;  
 JOHN RAMSEY.

ORDER ON INDIAN RESERVATION

The Osage Indian country lies in the Osage hills, situated in the northeastern part of Oklahoma, a beautiful rolling country covered with tall, green limestone grass, and considered the finest cattle grazing country in the world.

The Osage Indian Reservation, which is identical with Osage County, Oklahoma, consists of a million and a half acres of Indian allotted land, is the largest county in the State, being larger in area than the entire State of Delaware. It is bounded on the southeast by the Arkansas River, and stretches from Tulsa, Oklahoma, on the south to Pottawatomie City on the north, a distance of approximately sixty miles. It is also sixty miles in width at its widest point. To give an additional idea of its immensity, it contains over sixteen hundred public schools.

This reservation was acquired by the Cherokee Treaty from the Cherokee Indians July 9, 1866. The county seat at the time of the treaty was Pankuska, having a population of eight thousand. Other towns and villages in the county are Fairfax, Grayhorse, Moley, Wyand, Fenchling, Edinport and Holagoway.

The Osage Indian Agency, with headquarters at Pankuska, superintends the affairs of the Osage Indians, and attends to the disbursement of accounts due them. The agency is in turn under the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, head of the affairs of all Indian tribes under the protection of the United States Government, this Commission being under the direct supervision of the Department of the Interior.

By an enactment in 1907, head rights for 2,229 duly enrolled members of the Osage tribe were created. This number of head rights remains static, although the actual number of the tribe may increase or decrease, and vary as Osage Indians draw revenue from or are allotted tracts of land based upon their head rights. The original allotment to each Osage Indian consisted of 160 acres as a homestead, which was supplemented subsequently by various other land grants until each head right allotment consisted of approximately 657 acres.

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BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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To give an idea of the wealth of the Osage Indians in terms of money as compared with the large amounts of money received by them after oil was struck on the reservation, the following net per capita payments to each Osage Indian entitled to receive income from the common fund is set out:

**Net Per Capita Distribution**

1900	\$ 10.50	per year
1900	200.00	per year
1910	250.00	per year
1915	221.31	per year
1920	8,090.00	per year
1921 (the year of the first murder)	8,600.00	per year
1923 (the year of four murders)	12,400.00	per year

To give an additional idea of the enormous wealth of the Osage tribe at this period of time, this tribe, consisting of approximately 2,000 Indians who enjoyed head rights since the discovery of oil on the reservation until June 30, 1931, were paid a total net revenue of \$241,568,289.82 in addition to various other expenditures made in their behalf.

The tribal officers of the Osage Indians are elected every two years, and consist of a Chief and Assistant Chief, and of a Tribal Council of eight.

Certificates of competency were issued to Indians deemed to be able to handle their own financial affairs, the recipients being permitted to dispose of their head rights and allotted land holdings as they saw fit.

The number of actual producing oil wells on the reservation as of June 30, 1929, was 5,899, and had increased to 8,579 as of June 30, 1932. Practically all of the land contained in the reservation is leased for oil and natural gas production purposes.

Distribution of the funds to the Osage Indians differed from that of other tribes in that a common pool was made of all earnings derived from the territory which was divided among all the Indians of the tribe entitled to allotment rights, which at no time during the last decade as revealed more than two thousand.

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